

Report of the Black Canyon City  
Community Association Land Use Committee

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## Introduction

The Black Canyon City Community Association (Community Association) was established in 1967 to address the concerns of the citizens of the community, promote the common good and welfare of the citizens, strive for the improvement and betterment of all business facilities and services within the community, and promote and encourage a better community and civic spirit while fostering good will and friendship among the residents of Black Canyon City. One method by which the Community Association has historically performed this function has been through the formation of special committees to address issues and give the residents of the town an opportunity to use the Community Association as a sounding board. As a result of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) intention to revise the existing Resource Management Plan, the Black Canyon City Community Association Land Use Committee was formed in April of 2002 in order to provide a forum for the community to express their desires for the future use of public lands surrounding Black Canyon City.

## History of Black Canyon City

Black Canyon City has a multitude of historical origins, dating back to Pre-territorial days, which includes Indian settlements, military outposts, cattle ranching, transportation, farming, and mining. During the course of the community's history, it has been known by many names and has changed locations several times. The area was first known as the Agua Fria Mining District; following the location of placer gold deposits in Moore's Gulch, the Black Canyon, and much later in Squaw Creek. Next, the area became known as Goddard's or Canon, a result of Charles Goddard's appointment as

Postmaster in 1894 at the stage stop located east of the confluence of the Agua Fria River and Black Canyon Creek, near the point where Squaw Creek empties into the Agua Fria River. Later, the site was located on the south bank of the Agua Fria, to the west of Mr. Goddard's ranch. Finally, mining again came to the forefront with the opening of the Kay Copper Mine in the foothills of the Bradshaw Mountains west of Black Canyon City. With the copper mine in the early 1920's came electricity and the necessity of providing provisions for a working mine with 300 employees. This challenge was met by Ben Warner with the establishment of a store and mining supply depot, now known as the Rock Springs Store and Café, that furnished supplies until the closing of the mine in 1929, and remains in existence today as a café, bar and tourist shop.

As a result of the canyons and naturally occurring passes onto the mesas to the north, transportation routes soon developed throughout the area. During the 1860's U.S. cavalry troops are known to have stopped at the present site of Rock Springs for water, rest, and supplies while traveling to Forts Whipple, near present day Prescott, and Verde, near present day Camp Verde. Following the horses, came the wagons, with King Woolsey credited with bringing the first wagon through in the mid-1860's and the naming of his route through Black Canyon as the Woolsey Trail. The best-known route, however, was the Black Canyon Stage Road, later known as the Black Canyon Highway, running from Phoenix to Prescott, following the present-day Maggie Mine road /Bumble Bee/Mayer route, which remained in use by the stage line until approximately 1917. Presently, Interstate 17 connects Black Canyon City with Flagstaff to the north and Phoenix to the south and it is the only north/south interstate in Arizona.

Cattlemen often stopped in the area on their yearly drives to the slaughterhouses and sale barns in Phoenix. Later, sheepherders would use the same cattle trails to transfer their sheep to and from the high pastures of the forests in summer to the protective valleys north of Phoenix in the winters. In 1919 the route was officially established by the Department of Interior as the Black Canyon Stock Driveway and remained in use until 1974 when the Espil family of Litchfield Park drove the last sheep on the trail. Much of this stock driveway has been preserved within the Black Canyon Trails Area, established in 1969 and currently managed by the BLM, and is situated upon the old cattle and sheep routes located within the public lands administered by the BLM's Phoenix Field Office.

Farming in the area can be traced back to 1872-1874 when Jack Swilling and Jeff Martin are known to have grown vegetables and alfalfa along the banks of the Agua Fria River and Black Canyon. Jack Swilling moved into the Black Canyon City area to pursue mining interests in the Bradshaw Mountains, after essentially founding Phoenix in 1867 by clearing the ancient Hohokam irrigation canals and ditches along the Salt River, thereby bringing water and farming to the fertile soils of the Phoenix area. The remains of Jack Swilling's cabin are located in the Black Canyon City area, on private lands close to the old Stage Stop on School House road, and he retained ownership of this cabin until his death. Additionally, D.J. Albins, another early resident of Black Canyon City, is known to have grown a variety of vegetables, commercial crops, and flowers in the area from the 1930's to the late 1950's.

### Purpose of Committee

The Land Use Committee was formed to accomplish four primary goals. The first involved a survey of the residents of the Black Canyon City area regarding their current uses of the public lands within the planning areas. The second goal was to determine the desired uses of public lands for the future. The third goal was to determine undesirable uses of public lands for the future. The final goal of the committee was to compile the results of the survey and focus groups, identify a list of issues/concerns, and author a report for the use of the BLM during the Resource Management Plan revision process.

### Geographic Areas of Study

Two areas of study were identified and addressed during the accomplishment of the committee's goals. The first geographical area of concern is specific to the land use survey and includes all of the Agua Fria National Monument (AFNM) as well as that area described as the Bradshaw Foothills-Harquahala Planning Area (Bradshaws), an area in excess of three million acres, excluding private, state, and national forest lands. The second geographical area is much smaller and generally described as follows: that area bordered by and including the community of New River/Desert Hills on the south, bordered by and including the community of Bumble Bee on the north, and limited by the Prescott National Forest to the Lake Pleasant Regional Park on the west and by the Tonto National Forest on the east.

### Issue Identification/Public Comment Process

Upon the formation of the Black Canyon Land Use Committee ( the Committee) by the Black Canyon City Community Association, the first step was to notify the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) of the intentions of the Community Association and the Committee. This was accomplished by sending a written communication to Chris Horyza, Project Manager for the current revision of the Resource Management Plan (Appendix A.), informing him of the existence of the Committee and generally describing the goals of the Committee and process by which these goals were to be obtained.

Volunteers from the community distributed the Land Use Survey during public meetings, at local businesses, to individuals canvassing their neighborhoods, and to those persons requesting surveys to give to their friends, family, and neighbors. Through these efforts, approximately 900 surveys were distributed in and around the Black Canyon City area

Two public meetings were held at High Desert Park in order to familiarize the citizens with the BLM Land Use Plan and the impending revision and to solicit public opinion concerning the future uses of the public lands. Each of the public meetings was advertised by distribution of flyers announcing the meetings, by leaders of various special interest and civic groups, by a mass distribution of flyers in the Canyon Country News, the local newspaper (Appendix B.i.), by posting flyers on community bulletin boards (Appendix B.ii.), and through an article in the Local Interest Column on the front page of the 19 June 02 edition in the Canyon Country News (Appendix C.). The Canyon Country News distributed 1450 flyers announcing the Committee's meeting of 23 July 02 as an insert to the 8 July 02 edition of the paper.

During each public meeting, focus groups were conducted to assist in clarifying the goals that individuals desired for the Black Canyon City community. These groups were formed by randomly assigning the members of the community to one of six groups, which then assembled to discuss the things they would like to see happen or not happen in their community. Each group was given a pre-printed form upon which to answer the following questions: “What we want for Black Canyon City” and “What we don’t want for Black Canyon City”. The groups were asked to write down at least five statements for each question, but were encouraged to list more. The only requirement was that the entire group must agree to each statement listed. Each group numbered from six to eighteen and discussed their responses to the questionnaire for 45 to 90 minutes. During the focus group sessions, members of the Committee checked in with each group to assure they understood the task and to monitor their progress. Upon completion of the focus group session, each member was free to leave or remain for refreshments and continue speaking with their neighbors about issues of mutual concern.

### Survey Results

Approximately 900 survey forms were distributed and 301 were returned to the Committee for a return rate of 33.4%. The Survey indicated that the average length of time respondents have lived in the Black Canyon City area is 10.24 years. This means that the respondents to the Survey have a total of **3081.26 years of life experience** in using the public lands within the Planning Areas. This is a significant amount of community knowledge, insight, and experience, which can be a valuable resource to the BLM in preparing the Land Use Plan revision. The primary end users are the citizens



that live within the rural communities surrounded by those public lands and they are ultimately the stewards of that land. The results of the Survey are listed in rank order in Appendix E, but a summary of the types of activities and planning issues contained within each broad category is presented here, so as to better understand the interconnected nature of the results.

Hiking ranked as the most frequent use of the land with 78.7% of the respondents stating that they utilized the land in this manner. In designing the survey it was anticipated that “hiking”, as well as the other activities listed, might have a different meaning to each respondent. For example, one individual may hike the Agua Fria River bottom and gulches within the AFNM and travel cross-country to discover, view, study, locate, draw, and photograph some of the ancient archeological sites. Another individual traveling through the area stops at the Badger Springs visitor area, which may or may not include a short hike on a developed trail to observe the wildlife, flora, and archeological site located in that area. The needs of these individuals differ considerably. However, each is an end user of the land and is entitled to enjoy the experience in their chosen manner.

Sightseeing ranked number two on the Survey, with 71.8% of the respondents indicating that this is an activity in which they engage. Sightseeing, however, also has many meanings. To one individual that was queried, it meant viewing the landscape and sky as the sun rose in the mornings over Thumb Butte or set in the evenings behind the Bradshaw Mountains, whereas another individual referred to exploring many of the old mining roads with his four wheel drive vehicle and “seeing what was at the end of the road”, another discussed taking photos of the landscape in which he found himself, and

yet another referred to hiking the AFNM and observing the wildlife, canyons, and mesas. Therefore, this single item on the Survey encompasses the issues of viewshed, the designation of recreational opportunity vs. wilderness areas, wildlife habitat and its preservation, land tenure, off highway vehicle (OHV) use, management of visitor access, access to public lands through private or State lands, and the designation of roads vs. trails, to name but a few.

Picnicking placed third in the Survey with 67.1% of the votes. When respondents were queried as to what this term meant to them some included activities that involve hiking, riding a horse, traveling by OHV, or boating to a primitive area and enjoying a simple wiener roast over an open fire, alone or with friends. Others packed elaborate meals, prepared sandwiches or other dishes, drinks, plates, glasses, etc. and drove the family sedan to a developed picnic area.

Camping ranked fourth on the survey with 64.5% of the votes and included such activities as traveling to the camping site, either developed or wilderness, engaging in recreational/artistic/scouting pursuits once camp has been set, enjoying the scenery/solitude of the site, and cleaning up the camping area. It is obvious that many other activities can and do occur during a simple camping trip. For example; traveling to the site (boat, bicycle, foot, horse, or motorized vehicle); camp craft competitions/activities (picnicking/cooking, scouting events, setting up latrines/ax yards); aquatic activities (swimming, fishing, sunbathing); making use of the natural resources available (rock hounding/gathering, recreational prospecting, the gathering of plants/firewood); hunting activities (plinking/target shooting, hiking while scouting for game); and enjoying the environs in which one finds oneself (sightseeing,

observing/photographing wildlife, watching the stars/amateur astronomy) are all examples of activities in which one person could engage on a weekend camping trip.

Clearly, some prominent planning issues are associated with this simple camping trip: access (through the various jurisdictions, land status, land tenure designations, designation of open vs. closed roads/trails, and of the “authorized” modes of transportation); preservation of wildlife habitat and riparian areas; viewshed (with regard to communication sites/corridors and alternative energy source sites, as well as urban development/encroachment); preservation and/or development of culturally/historically significant sites and artifacts; management of visitor activities, to include: mineral location, recreational prospecting, fire safety, protection of endangered/listed species, firewood gathering; water rights (fire protection and development of visitor opportunities/educational facilities); and the development and provision of services for recreational opportunities (developed camping sites/trails, semi-developed shooting ranges, disposal of garbage and treatment of sewerage/gray water, commercial development in rural communities required for supporting the use of public lands, and educational experiences).

Star gazing and amateur astronomy holds the number five spot with 63.5% of the votes. This includes everything from organized “star gazing” events to sitting on an isolated ridge and watching the stars cross the sky. It is apparent that many of the above issues apply to this use of public lands as well. Other issues not previously considered include: urban encroachment and the associated “light pollution”, the development of “reserved” areas for nighttime observations, collaboration between differing jurisdictional entities to preserve and enhance this educational/recreational opportunity,

control of visitor access during periods of peak use, land disposal/withdrawal and acquisition, and prescribed burning or uncontrolled wildfires during periods of peak observation opportunity causing haze and further light pollution as well as reducing the air quality in general.

As a result of the thorough analysis of planning issues and uses detailed above, the reader should now be well acquainted with the delicate balance between the regulation of land use, preservation of the environment, development of recreational opportunities and the stewardship by those using the public lands. Therefore, there will be no further discussion of the activities listed on the Survey. The reader may refer to Appendix E at their will to determine the rank order of the activities included on the survey.

#### Issue Identification Groups

The first public meeting that included a focus group was held on 9 July 02 and was attended by 31 residents of the community, inclusive of the Committee members. These citizens comprised **a total of 254 years of experience** in using the public lands located within the planning areas. The second public meeting was attended by 84 residents of the Black Canyon City/ New River/Desert Hills communities, inclusive of the Committee members. These residents contained **a total of 825.7 years of experience, knowledge, and utilization** of the lands enclosed within the planning areas. The results of those focus groups are located in Appendix F for the review of the reader. The related planning issues, to include examples of each, which were identified by the

Committee members as well as queries of the public in attendance, will be discussed herein.

Generally speaking the specific issues identified by the focus groups fall into one of the following categories: protection and utilization of natural resources; land status/tenure; economic and educational opportunity development; protection of habitat and wilderness areas; development of recreational opportunities; and access to public lands. Although some of these issues cross over into several of the above categories, these designations will be used to facilitate the ease of reading and organization of this report. It is important to note that the issues are not ranked in order of importance to the citizens of Black Canyon and the surrounding communities; only that the issues, as conceived by the Committee members and populace, are being reported to the BLM for their consideration in this planning effort. This writer will attempt to cover each issue only once in this report and merely point out the interrelated issues as they occur.

#### Protection and utilization of natural resources

Many different issues fall under this heading: protection of water rights and appropriations, preservation of grazing allotments as well as the maintenance of windmills, and the garbage/trash and illegal dumping on public lands. The focus groups came to a consensus on the amount of growth that they would like to see occur in the Black Canyon City area. “Minimum growth and changes” while retaining the “quiet rural” and “small town atmosphere” of the community and not endangering the “watershed and natural resources” appears to be the wish of those respondents attending the public meetings. Water is critical for the survival of the community and the addition of large subdivisions or commercial developments in the area would endanger the

existence of the community. This desire to remain rural and “preserve our open spaces”, once examined critically and taken in context with other comments (i.e., “moratorium on building new homes into BLM”), leads one to conclude that further development of public lands surrounding the community, through land exchanges with developers, would be contrary to the wishes of the citizens currently using those lands. This issue will be addressed further in the next section under land status/tenure.

Additionally, when one considers the current land uses, grazing, although utilized by only a few ranchers, is one of the predominant uses with regard to total land area. This is consistent with the wishes of the citizens of Black Canyon City in that they do not wish for an “open range” to exist, in that cattle may freely wander the streets of the community, however, they are supportive of grazing allotments and the maintenance of watering facilities by the owners of those allotments. This allows others to use the same allotments for equestrian activities and for human activities, once the water has been properly treated and is fit for human consumption.

Finally, garbage and trash, as well as illegal dumping on public lands are clearly concerns for the citizens of Black Canyon City. It is apparent, from a cursory drive through the public lands in the Planning Areas, that roadside garbage and trash is evident, even in some of the more remote areas, and one can at times locate car bodies, automobile parts, and discarded watercraft in the more readily accessible areas. The citizens of Black Canyon City have been expressed a desire to “keep the land pristine” and this has been supported by statements such as “if you pack it in, pack it out” and historically by such actions such as volunteer “clean-up” days conducted in cooperation

with the BLM. Therefore, garbage on the trails, illegal dumping, and trash by the side of the roads was a significant concern for the citizens of Black Canyon City.

#### Land status/tenure

In order to preserve the rural nature of the community, as one group stated “BLM lands [must] stay out of developers hands”. As those public lands surrounding the community are currently “available for trade” the issue of land tenure is a major concern for the citizens of Black Canyon City. Additionally, a desire to keep the “Bradshaw and New River mountains preserved in a natural state”, “to protect the Agua Fria”, for “land reserved for recreational purposes” and for “preserves to protect wildlife” and the saguaro cacti growing in the area was expressed by the citizens of Black Canyon City.

Conversely, the citizens also wished for lands to be made available for public purposes by expressing a desire for “additional medical facilities”, “more parks”, “trails for horseback”, an “extension of the Agua Fria National Monument “, and a “family and children community center”. Other comments were “better police protection” and to “sell requested land to [the] fire department”. Obviously, from the numerous strong comments from the focus groups, they are not in favor of developing the lands for residential purposes, but are very supportive of developing recreational opportunities and public services upon public lands.

#### Economic and educational opportunity development

The AFNM; as a newly created, undeveloped national monument; offers a wealth of issues and opportunities. For example, as previously stated, some wish to expand the monument, others have asked for the development of hiking and equestrian trails, some have requested the formation of nature preserves, while still others have expressed a

desire to protect the Agua Fria River and it's watershed area. These issues clearly apply to the monument in that the extent of trail development (designating those areas that should be open for public viewing vs. reserved for scientific study) and the nature of those trails (i.e., hiking, mountain biking, OHV, equestrian; educational/interpretative), as well as the manner in which citizens are to explore the monument (unlimited access on existing roads/trails vs. building of new trails/roads, Ranger assisted vs. self-guided explorations of developed sites vs. unguided opportunities for exploration); are yet to be determined.

Additionally, the development of the monument will require the development of support services (i.e., wildfire response teams; visitor/educational centers; garbage, sewage treatment; electrical service; and drinking water), locations for those services (public lands vs. acquisition of private lands), and provide opportunities for commercial development (i.e., commercial tours of the monument and commercial development in the surrounding communities to support the citizen's use of the monument by "encouraging small business growth", as well as the development of renewable alternative energy sources; i.e., wind, solar, geothermal). While at the same time respecting the local communities wish to "protect our water supply", remain a "quiet rural community", and "preserving the visual integrity of the area; while avoiding "resorts", "Wal-Mart" and the depletion of natural resources.

#### Protection of habitat and wilderness areas

The focus groups expressed a clear desire for the protection of animal habitat and supported the creation of recreational opportunities in wilderness areas. Statements made by the groups included: "[not] restricting our use of BLM land", "preserving our scenic



beauty”, “no development on the mountains”, “preserves to protect wildlife, water use”, and protecting the saguaro cacti that grow in this area, but do not grow farther north. Additionally, the groups identified the issues of “urban encroachment”, “light pollution”, the “destruction of animal habitat”, and the “preservation of open space” as concerns that they have regarding the future of Black Canyon City and the public lands surrounding their community.

#### Development of recreational opportunities

The development of recreational opportunities includes many issues that are relevant to the Bradshaw and AFNM planning areas. Some of these issues have been identified previously, but may be touched upon briefly in this section again. The development of recreational opportunities includes issues such as land tenure, access, economic/educational facility development, the protection of habitat and wilderness areas, and the protection and utilization of natural resources. Additionally, and more specifically, the creation of recreational opportunities includes: “reserv[ing the land] for recreational purposes” through the “preservation of open spaces”, and the “designat[ion] of area[s] for each activity” (i.e., equestrian trails, OHV, hiking, multi-use, and recreational prospecting). Further, the groups expressed a desire to “maintain existing trails”, stop “urban encroachment”, to prevent the “destruction of natural habitats”, and for “the land around BCC to be removed from the trading block”.

#### Access to public lands

Finally, although not the least of concerns for the focus groups, was the issue of access to public lands. This is a complicated issue, but the groups spoke quite clearly in that they don’t want their “use of BLM lands [restricted]“, that they “don’t want [the]

Agua Fria and Black Canyon closed to public use”, that they desire BLM to negotiate “with private land owners “ to procure and “establish right of ways to access BLM land”, and that public access to the lands be “free”. Additionally, this issue would contain the problem as to the type of access that is to be allowed (i.e., motorized vs. non-motorized), jurisdictional issues (i.e., state vs. private ownership and the traversing of those lands), the designation of primitive wilderness areas vs. recreational areas vs. areas reserved for scientific study, the issue of designating roads vs. trails, and the maintenance of those trails and roads once they are established.

### Discussion

From the foregoing discussion of issues it can easily be determined that the revision of the Resource Management Plans for the Bradshaws and AFNM are complex issues. As a result of this complexity, the citizens of Black Canyon City and the surrounding areas also envision many opportunities to work with the BLM in a collaborative manner to ensure the continued enjoyment of the land by all users through continued stewardship, trail adoption programs, volunteer clean-ups of trash, the creation of new trails, inter-community projects, and the maintenance of existing recreational opportunities as well as the creation of new ones. Hopefully, BLM will recognize this spirit of volunteerism and take advantage of the opportunity to work with those in the communities located within public lands that they manage in a cooperative manner.

## Appendix A

Appendix B.i. Flyer for Distribution in Canyon Country News

# PUBLIC MEETING

The Black Canyon City Community Association, in cooperation with The High Desert Park, want to know what **YOU** would like to see happen with the BLM land surrounding our community.

Much of the public land surrounding our town is available for trade. Your opinion counts. Join with your neighbors in telling the BLM what **we** want for the future of Black Canyon City.

JULY 23<sup>rd</sup>  
High Desert Park  
6:00 p.m.

Appendix B.ii.Flyer for Local Bulletin Boards/Distribution

# PUBLIC MEETING

The Black Canyon City Community Association, in cooperation with The High Desert Park, want to know what **YOU** would like to see happen with the BLM land surrounding our community.

Much of the public land surrounding our town is available for trade. Your opinion counts. Join with your neighbors in telling the BLM what **we** want for the future of Black Canyon City.

JULY 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>  
High Desert Park  
6:00 p.m.

## Appendix C

Appendix D

LAND USE OPINION SURVEY

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years living in Black Canyon City area \_\_\_\_\_

Place a mark next to each land use you participate in around the BCC area.

- \_\_\_ Hiking
- \_\_\_ Fishing
- \_\_\_ Hunting
- \_\_\_ Picnicking
- \_\_\_ Boating
- \_\_\_ Camping
- \_\_\_ Sightseeing
- \_\_\_ Swimming
- \_\_\_ Sunbathing
- \_\_\_ Grazing
- \_\_\_ Recreational prospecting
- \_\_\_ Rock hounding/gathering
- \_\_\_ Commercial mining
- \_\_\_ Plant gathering—specimens/subsistence
- \_\_\_ Firewood gathering
- \_\_\_ Plinking/target shooting
- \_\_\_ Star gazing/amateur astronomy
- \_\_\_ Scenic/wildlife/nature photography
- \_\_\_ Scouting events
- \_\_\_ Retreat/solitude/respice
- \_\_\_ Nature trails—exercise/educational
- \_\_\_ Bird watching
- \_\_\_ Horseback activities
- \_\_\_ Quad/dirt bike riding
- \_\_\_ Off-highway vehicles
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E: Rank Order of Survey Results

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Number of votes</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Hiking	237	78.7
Sightseeing	216	71.8
Picnicking	202	67.1
Camping	194	64.5
Star gazing/amateur astronomy	191	63.5
Scenic/wildlife/nature photography	185	61.5
Nature trails---exercise/educational	184	61.1
Retreat/solitude/respice	171	56.8
Rock hounding/gathering	149	49.5
Bird watching	148	49.2
Off-highway vehicles	140	46.5
Fishing	140	46.5
Plinking/target shooting	139	46.1
Swimming	133	44.2
Quad/dirt bike riding	131	43.5
Recreational prospecting	110	36.5
Hunting	107	35.5
Horseback activities	100	33.2
Boating	90	29.9
Firewood gathering	89	29.6
Sunbathing	81	26.9
Plant gathering---specimens/subsistence	55	18.3
Scouting events	39	13.0
Grazing	26	8.6
Commercial mining	10	3.3
Cycling	7	2.3
Picking up trash	3	.9
Canine activities	2	.7
Landscape painting	1	.3



Appendix F.i. Questionnaire Responses of 09 July 02

Appendix F.ii. Questionnaire Responses of 23 July 02

